



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

NUMBER:
FOR RELEASE:
<http://www.dhs.ca.gov>

02-50
IMMEDIATE

DATE: September 18, 2002
CONTACT: Ken August
or Lea Brooks
(916) 657-3064

STATE HEALTH DIRECTOR ANNOUNCES PROBABLE CASE OF WEST NILE VIRUS IMPORTED TO CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

SACRAMENTO- A Contra Costa County man has been diagnosed as a probable case of West Nile virus, State Health Director Diana M. Bontá, R.N., Dr.P.H., announced today. The man had traveled to Chicago late last month where it is believed that he was bitten by a mosquito infected with the virus.

The man became ill on Sept. 4 and was hospitalized with encephalitis on Sept 6. Laboratory tests indicate he was infected with West Nile virus. He has been discharged from the hospital and is recovering at home.

California's only locally acquired case of West Nile virus, a Los Angeles County woman, was reported earlier this month.

West Nile virus is typically spread to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. State and local public health officials have been conducting an expanded surveillance program for West Nile virus since 2000, searching for evidence of infection in people, mosquitoes, birds and other animals.

The virus, which can cause encephalitis, was first detected in the United States in New York in 1999 and has been found in 43 states and the District of Columbia. Most individuals who are infected with West Nile virus have only mild symptoms such as fever, headache and body aches. However, the virus can cause severe symptoms and occasionally death in the elderly and individuals with lowered immune systems.

Bontá emphasized that the risk of any individual becoming ill from the bite of a mosquito infected with West Nile virus is very low. Less than one percent of the bites from infected mosquitoes cause severe disease. The risk of disease is higher for individuals 50 years of age and older.

Individuals can reduce their risk of mosquito-borne diseases by taking these precautions:

- Avoid activity outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk.
- When outdoors, wear long pants, long sleeve shirts and other protective clothing.

-more

- Apply insect repellent according to label instructions.
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding.
- Contact your local mosquito and vector control agency if there is a significant mosquito problem where you live or work.

Many species of birds get infected and die from West Nile virus. Bontá asked the public to become part of the California Department of Health Services' (CDHS) extensive monitoring effort for the virus by reporting any crows, ravens, magpies, and jays that have been dead for less than 24 hours. CDHS has established a toll-free line - 877-WNV-BIRD - for public reporting.

Additional information about West Nile virus in California can be found at <http://www.dhs.ca.gov>. or by calling the CDHS West Nile virus information line - 866-847-2246.